

Is there a
substance
abuse
problem
in our
family?



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MOYERS on ADDICTION



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Dear Family Member,

Millions of Americans struggle with addiction to chemical substances. Something they take, drink, or smoke becomes the master of their minds and the tyrant of their lives. Many struggle in secret, ashamed or afraid to ask for help. The consequences are devastating.

My new PBS series — Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home — explores the science, treatment, prevention, and politics of addiction. This guide offers practical advice on ways you can help your family understand and confront addiction. It also offers suggestions for intervening with family members — spouse, siblings, parents — who already have serious problems with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Hardly a family in America — including my own — has been spared some experience with addiction. The good news is that steps you take can make a big difference to you and your loved ones.

Bill Moyers

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Back Flap

Questions to Ask When Choosing an Addiction Treatment Program
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Resources

This guide is intended for individual use, and it also offers subjects for discussion groups. You are encouraged to photocopy the guide and share it with others.

People who feel they're alone in this effort can find help in the community: student assistance



COURTESY, PROJECT RETURN

personnel at school, parent education and support groups, community police officers,

local clergy, hospitals, and clinics....

I have seen family



DAVID HARRY STEWART/TONY STONE IMAGES

members who feel totally isolated turn things around by reaching out to these places.

— Patricia M. Warble, Coordinator, Bedford, Lewisboro, and Pound Ridge Drug Abuse Prevention Council

Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home Program Schedule
Please check local listings for broadcast dates and any scheduling changes

Portrait of Addiction
The Hijacked Brain
Changing Lives
The Next Generation
The Politics of Addiction

Sunday, March 29
Sunday, March 29
Monday, March 30
Tuesday, March 31
Tuesday, March 31

To order videocassettes of ***Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home***, contact Films for the Humanities and Sciences at 800-257-5126.



Addiction and the Family

We take great pride in our family members' accomplishments. Why not? We are an important influence in their lives. Unfortunately, addiction is a family affair too.

Children's experience at home is the largest single factor in whether or not they will have a drug or alcohol problem early in life. A majority of people in trouble with alcohol or drugs were introduced to them at home. The stress and pain from living in an alcohol- or drug-affected family can lead to the use of substances by other family members.

This vicious cycle does not have to be repeated. Addiction is a chronic relapsing disease caused by multiple factors — such as genetics, trauma, and a family history of substance abuse — yet many behaviors can make the problem better or worse for a family. (The same thing can be said about other chronic diseases like diabetes.) The very best prevention program for many people at risk is to make sure their addicted family member receives appropriate treatment.

What to do

Several steps need to take place to enhance a family's role in preventing alcohol or drug addiction. First, we must create family environments in which it is *not* acceptable to be drunk or high on drugs. If a parent, other adult, or child has an alcohol or drug problem, someone must have the courage to address it. Even if the problem cannot be resolved right away, family members must know that something is wrong, and the individual is trying to get better. Since a majority of adults drink at least some alcohol, there needs to be a clear pattern of behavior that shows the difference between use and abuse.

Young people spot hypocrisy faster than adults can speak it. We must talk clearly to them about our expectations that they not drink, smoke, or take drugs — but our own behavior is much more influential than our words. Adults must model what they want youth to become.

Treatment is needed

One of the major reasons addiction persists in families is the lack of access to treatment. Today in the United States, fewer than 30 percent of the people who need alcohol or drug treatment actually receive it. A major part of the problem is that public and private medical insurance will not pay for adequate treatment. This is not a matter of money. It is actually cheaper to pay for decent addiction treatment than to continue paying for the medical consequences and injuries that result from untreated problems. Yet we needlessly condemn children and adults to suffer with addictions because of popular opinion,

which holds addiction as a moral weakness, not a treatable disease.

Finally, there is an important community dimension to addressing addiction. When an adult or a child has a problem, concerned adults should make a concerted effort to intervene. Yet, sadly, when it comes to substance abuse, most of us still look away. For example, teachers frequently sense there must be a problem at home, but they have no training, time, or permission to get involved and make a referral.

Each of us can get involved. One step we can take is to tell our employers, our insurers, and our legislators that we want addiction covered like other diseases. We can also work to ensure that treatment centers are welcomed into our neighborhoods. Concerted community leadership is needed to identify and address substance abuse problems in all settings where they occur.

Addiction is a serious, but not hopeless problem. We can join together to address it in our families and communities.

David L. Rosenbloom is Director of Join Together, a national resource center for communities fighting substance abuse and gun violence.



STEPHANIE RAUSSER/FPG INTERNATIONAL

H

How Can We Protect Our Children?

All children are at risk of developing substance abuse problems if they are exposed to addicting substances and use them repeatedly. But a number of risk factors increase the chances that they will become drug-involved, including:

Family History

- Alcoholism or addiction in the family

Psychology

- Childhood aggression
- Lack of problem-solving skills
- Depression
- Compulsiveness

Family Environment

- Domestic violence or child abuse
- Lack of adult supervision

School

- Rejection by peers
- Lack of commitment to school

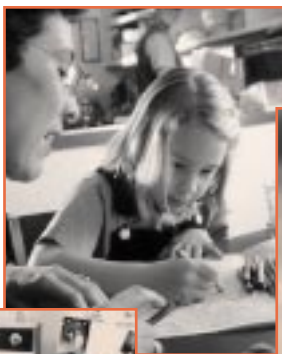
If your child has some of these risk factors, he or she is not doomed to become a substance abuser. Even kids at high risk may never develop an addiction. By taking steps now, you can help your child avoid — or *delay* — any drug experimentation. And delay is key: Kids who start experimenting at an early age are at considerably higher risk for developing addictions. Someone who makes it to age 20 without abusing drugs/alcohol is less likely to develop a substance abuse problem. Here are just a few of the things you can do:

1. **Do a family history to determine whether your family has shown signs of alcoholism or other addiction.** If so, your children are especially vulnerable. Let them know they can take steps such as abstaining from substances that cause addiction.
2. **Evaluate your own use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.** If you walk in the door at night and grab a beer, or light up a cigarette every time you get tense, what are you conveying to your child about how to cope with life and its stresses?
3. **Foster strong family bonds to help counter powerful peer influences.** If kids have a sense of belonging within their own families, they will be less likely to seek it elsewhere.
4. **Set clear expectations for behavior.** In a major survey, thousands of teens reported that their biggest reason for choosing not to drink — or drinking less than they would have — is that their parents would be upset by it.

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JIM CUMMINS/IFG INTERNATIONAL

5. **Let your kids know they can talk to you about anything, without harsh judgment or lectures.** And be on the look-out for “teachable moments,” like when your child raises the subject of drugs, or when an anti-drug commercial comes on TV.
6. **Expose your children to activities like sports, art, music, reading, or drama, so that they develop avid interests.** When kids are bored, they are more likely to experiment.
7. **Help your child feel a part of her school.** Go to school functions with your child whenever you can. Research shows that children who feel bonded with their school are less likely to use substances.
8. **Teach your child to make independent decisions.** Allow your kids to make some of their own decisions, so that when faced with offers of drugs or alcohol, they can resist pressure.
9. **Teach your child to cope with frustration and stress.** When your child is upset, help him or her to learn ways to feel better — like talking about it, taking a walk, or relaxation techniques.
10. **Teach your child to be skeptical of sales pitches.** Whether watching commercials or passing a billboard advertising cigarettes or alcohol, help your child discern between the salesman’s interest and his own.

Suggested reading: National Institute on Drug Abuse. *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents*. Washington, D.C.: National Institutes of Health, 1997.

F

Family Activities for a Drug-Free Life

We sometimes feel there's little we can do to keep our kids, our spouses, and even our parents from using drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. But spouses and older adults respond to expressions of concern about drug abuse. And young people whose parents urge them not to use drugs are less likely to do so — even if they're curious or pressured by peers. You can help protect your family by creating a loving home and working to develop drug-free activities.

- ▶ **Let family members know you love them.** Everyone appreciates an “I love you.” If you're angry with your child, distinguish between the behavior you disapprove of and his or her essential worth.
What are other ways to let your family know you love them?
- ▶ **Make time for fun.** It doesn't have to take long: 10 minutes to read from a book or to play catch. An hour to ride bikes or to start a sewing project. Introducing children to a variety of activities gives them wholesome things to turn to when they have time on their hands.
What are some things your child likes to do?
- ▶ **Establish or renew family traditions** such as Sunday brunches, religious worship, cooking together, or sending photos to relatives.
What activities will create good memories for your family?
- ▶ **Hold family meetings to problem-solve and plan activities.** Older children can research vacation spots or brainstorm solutions for conflicts.
What issues does your family need on its agenda?
- ▶ **Limit TV.** TV can be interesting and enjoyable — but too much can interfere with family life.
What are your family rules about TV?
- ▶ **Make time for each child.** Daily or weekly, give each child time alone with you. Heart-to-heart talks let kids know you are aware and care.
What are some compliments you would like to share with each child?
- ▶ **Communicate your values.** Talk with kids about right and wrong — and gray areas.
When have you and your child communicated meaningfully?
- ▶ **Tune in to your loved ones.** Be aware that behavioral problems can be risk factors for kids. Know that normal teen moodiness and drug-related moodiness are not the same. If a family member is abusing

substances, don't try to handle everything alone.

How do members of your family cope with loneliness and boredom?

- ▶ **Get to know your children's friends and dates.** Open communication keeps you in touch with who your children are close to.

When is the last time you talked with one of your child's friends?

- ▶ **Know where your children are.** Require them to inform you about where they are and to get home on time. Rules and consequences, limits and freedoms, teach children to be responsible.

What are the consequences in your home for breaking rules?

- ▶ **Talk openly about drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes.** Give examples of situations when children may be offered drugs or alcohol. Talk about what they can do to stay out of trouble.

Do you approve of alcohol under certain circumstances?

- ▶ **Take family members' concerns seriously.** Treat them with respect, and let them know that whatever happens, you are there for them.

What are your three greatest strengths as a parent? As a spouse? As a sibling? What are three things you would like to improve?

- ▶ **Pay special attention to seniors who have recently retired or have been recently bereaved.** They are at high risk for addiction, particularly alcoholism.

What are some of the ways you can help older family members?



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ROB GAGE/FRG INTERNATIONAL



Steps You Can Take for Your Family and Your Community

Many people feel powerless to protect their family members from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Sometimes they remain silent and hope for the best. But you can make a big difference.

These are things you can do, no matter where you live or what your circumstances are.

Take A Step for Your Family

- ▶ **Set a good example.** Let all members of the family know that substance abuse is unhealthy and unacceptable.
- ▶ **Be aware of negative changes in family members' behavior and peer groups.** If you suspect that drugs or alcohol are involved, don't be afraid to bring up the subject.

The Boys and Girls Clubs National Hotline at 800-448-3000 will let you speak to a counselor about substance abuse involving family members. Spanish-speaking counselors are available.

- ▶ **If drug or alcohol abuse has caused problems in your family and you need help, resources are available to you.**

Al-Anon provides mutual support for people affected by someone else's compulsive drinking. Call 800-356-9996 to be referred to a group in your area.

Take A Step for Your Community

- ▶ **Get to know the parents of your children's friends** and discuss how to discourage experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Ideally, you should develop shared rules about curfews, supervision of parties, and places that are off-limits.
- ▶ **Join a support group that meets your needs.** There are parents' support groups, spouse support groups, and others. Ask the substance abuse prevention coordinator at your child's school whom to contact. If no support group is in place, talk to school and religious leaders and other parents, and form a core leadership group that can get things started.
- ▶ **Get to know your neighbors,** perhaps by organizing a block party. Talk to them about areas of shared concern.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America facilitates local responses to the nation's drug-related problems. Call them at 800-54-CADCA. The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information provides their list of community coalitions working in this area. Call 800-729-6686 and ask for the "Volunteer Today" pamphlet.

- ▶ **Meet with public officials in your community.** Ask them about their plans to reduce levels of substance abuse, such as improving prevention and treatment services.

Join Together (617-437-1500) is a national non-profit group that encourages local community organizations to work together to develop strategies to reduce substance abuse.

- ▶ **Work with local merchants and police** to make sure that stores are not selling cigarettes or liquor to minors.

For a copy of "Stop the Sale: Prevent the Addiction," write to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345.

- ▶ **Find out where substance abuse prevention fits into the curriculum at your local schools.** Ensure that your community provides a variety of drug- and alcohol-free recreational activities for your kids.

The Benton Foundation operates a Web site (www.kidscampaign.org) that can help you get information to build a better community for kids. The foundation can also be reached at 202-638-5770.

- ▶ **Learn as much as you can about the drug policy debate.** Organize a letter writing campaign to your congressional representatives. Express your concern about addiction and your support of increased funding for prevention and expansion of treatment.

The Join Together Web site (www.jointogether.org) offers current news stories about alcohol, drug, and tobacco issues and a database of thousands of community groups you can join.

A Final Note

Action gets things done — at home, in our communities, and on a national level. You can make a difference.

D

o We Have a Problem in Our Family?

If so, you are not alone. According to a Gallup poll, one of every four Americans says that drinking has been a problem in his or her home. And that doesn't take into account millions of families affected by drugs other than alcohol — like cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and prescription drugs.

And it's not just teens. People get very concerned when a child or teenager uses drugs because of the profound damage they can do to their bodies and futures. But substance abuse problems can occur in any family member, including a sibling, spouse, aunt, uncle, cousin, parent — even a grandparent.

“How do I know for sure that it's addiction or alcoholism?”

It's difficult, but the rule of thumb is this: It's addiction or alcoholism if the person has had negative consequences resulting from his or her substance use — yet continues to use anyway.

- Strained relationships
- Legal problems
- Money problems
- Accidents or DWIs related to substance use
- Health problems
- School/work problems
- Depression/suicide attempts

“It's affecting our whole family!”

It will. Family members of a substance abuser often experience:

- Shame
- Anxiety
- Arguments
- Distrust
- Isolation
- Guilt
- Confusion
- Frustration
- Depression
- Self-blame
- Abuse
- Neglect

“But the problem is so obvious. Why doesn't he/she see it?”

That's a question that's stumped millions of family members through the years because one of the actual symptoms of chemical dependency is a mental process called “denial.” The person is unable to see that his or her substance abuse is a problem — even while evidence is piling up around him.

“If this person really loved us, wouldn't he/she stop?”

Unfortunately, love has nothing to do with it. Drugs that cause addic-

tion change the way our brains work by disrupting the mechanisms through which nerve cells transmit, receive, and process information. After repeated dosings, the affected circuits need more of the drug to stimulate them. The person now craves the thing that is ruining his life.

“So what can I do?”

Talk to the person, formally or informally, in what’s called an “intervention.” Don’t wait for your loved one to “bottom out,” have a car crash or develop some serious health problem before you address it. Remember, addiction is treatable. And there are sensitive, trained healthcare providers who can help you decide how to proceed.

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RON CHAPPLE/FPG INTERNATIONAL

“It helped me enormously to think that I had a disease, that it wasn’t just a moral failure on my part.”

H

How to Approach an Intervention

There are two ways to intervene with a substance abuser: an informal intervention (a personal discussion) or a structured intervention. The latter involves bringing together a group of people with the substance abuser to explore how the abuse has affected all their lives, and is used when the person has repeatedly declined to get help.

- ▶ **In any intervention, it's important to approach your loved one when he/she is not high or drunk** (and when you are not acutely upset). Some additional hints:
 - Stay calm
 - Couch your comments in concern
 - Avoid labeling the person an "alcoholic" or "addict"
 - Cite specific incidents resulting from the person's substance abuse ("You were recently arrested for DWI.")
 - Stick to what you know firsthand, not hearsay
 - Talk in "I statements," explaining how the person's behavior has affected you ("When you drive drunk, I don't sleep all night.")
 - Be prepared for denial and resentment
 - Be supportive and hopeful about change
- ▶ **The point of any intervention is to ask the person to take concrete steps to address the problem** (i.e., go for a substance abuse evaluation, attend family counseling, enter in-patient treatment).
- ▶ **A structured intervention should be facilitated by a professional.** The goal is to have the person begin treatment immediately.
 1. Enlist a professional to help plan it (see *Resources*)
 2. Bring together the people most significant to the abuser (3 to 6 is best, no children)
 3. Decide who is going to say what
 4. Make all arrangements for the person to begin treatment immediately following the intervention
 5. Identify the objections you might hear from the substance abuser, and be prepared to answer each one
 6. Decide what consequences you're prepared to follow through with if

the person refuses to enter treatment. (For a teenager, it might be, “We will file a petition with the court to have you placed in treatment.” For a spouse: “I will no longer cover up for you,” or even: “I won’t remain in this relationship with you.”)

7. Rehearse the intervention at least once

▶ Intervening With a Senior Citizen

- Use only recent examples of incidents; don’t dredge things up from the distant past
- When prescription drugs are involved, consult a physician with expertise in addiction
- Obtain the free pamphlet, “How to Talk to an Older Adult Who Has a Problem with Alcohol or Medications” by calling Hazelden at 800-444-7008

If Your Loved One Relapses

Since addiction is a chronic disease, relapses do occur. If this happens, don’t lose hope. A relapse doesn’t mean that the person isn’t trying, or that his/her recovery is “failing.” The majority of alcoholics and addicts who eventually recover suffer at least one relapse along the way.

If a relapse occurs, get back in touch with the professional or self-help group that you’ve worked with in the past, and prepare to intervene again. But remember, ultimately you are not in control of whether your loved one stays in recovery. You can only control how you react to his/her behavior — and how you conduct your own life.



COURTESY OF THE JOHNSON INSTITUTE

Questions to Ask When Choosing an Addiction Treatment Program

by Maia Szalavitz

1. Is the program accredited?

National accreditation programs look for effective approaches to treatment. Accreditors also require a well-documented complaint process. Lack of accreditation may mean nothing — but it could indicate fringe status or, at worst, an abusive form of “care.”

2. Is its treatment “research-based”?

Treatment is a new field of study, so it is too early to expect all providers to have comprehensive evaluations of their methods. Still, it is not too early for them to be planning these studies. (The better programs have outside evaluators.)

3. What medications do they prescribe for other disorders the patient might have, such as depression or chronic pain? Is the staff knowledgeable about medications that may help treat addiction?

The best programs evaluate addicted patients for medical problems like clinical depression, anxiety, or chronic pain shortly after admission and offer appropriate care, including medication if indicated. Also, medications such as methadone, naltrexone, and disulfiram (Antabuse), can help some types of addicts (particularly opiate addicts and/or alcoholics) to recover.

4. What sort of “aftercare” does the program offer?

Short-term treatment is not enough to sustain recovery. Aftercare is crucial; preferably a year of outpatient counseling, plus participation in 12-Step programs or other self-help groups. A good treatment program will help the patient integrate into a group, although patients sometimes have to “shop around” to find the best one.

5. What does the program do about relapse?

Relapse is common. A good program includes relapse prevention classes. The program should teach patients to deal with situations that could trigger relapse. It should also have a plan for re-entering treatment to prevent a one-time lapse from becoming a return to full-blown addiction.

Organizations

The following organizations either serve the entire nation or act as umbrella organizations for local affiliates.

Al-Anon/Alateen

1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
800-356-9996

Meeting information:
800-344-2666

www.al-anon.alateen.org

Al-Anon offers support groups for relatives and friends of individuals with an alcohol problem. Alateen is primarily for teenagers and may include preteens.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

1230 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-815-5766
www.bgca.org

National network of neighborhood-based facilities serving some 2.6 million children, primarily from disadvantaged circumstances. Its program SMART Moves teaches young people how to resist pressures that lead to drug and alcohol use.

Children of Alcoholics Foundation

33 W. 60th Street
New York, NY 10023
212-757-2100, ext. 6373

Seeks to help young and adult children of alcoholics; educate the public and professionals about this group; disseminate research on the effects of family alcoholism on children; and encourage decision makers to respond to the needs of this high-risk group.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

901 North Pitt Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314
800-54-CADCA, ext. 242
www.cadca.org

National substance abuse prevention organization formed in 1992 by the President's Drug Advisory Council. Helps substance abuse coalitions share ideas, problems, and solutions. Works with community-based coalitions and represents their interests at the national level.

Hazelden Information Center

CO 3, PO Box 11
Center City, MN 55012-0011
800-257-7810
www.hazelden.org

Works to improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities by providing information, education, and recovery services; to advance the field through research and training; and to improve its effectiveness through continuous improvement and innovation.

Join Together

441 Stuart Street, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02116
617-437-1500
www.jointogether.org

National resource center bringing together people, ideas, and technology to help community leaders across disciplines and institutions develop strategies to address alcohol and drug problems that plague communities.

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847-2345
800-729-6686
www.health.org

National resource for information about substance abuse prevention. Offers publications, videos, research information, and curriculum materials — many available free of charge.

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD)

12 West 21st Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10010
800-NCA-CALL
www.ncadd.org

Provides education, help, and hope in the fight against alcoholism and other drug addictions. With its nationwide network of affiliates, it advocates prevention, intervention, and treatment.

National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth

1820 Franwell Avenue, Suite 16
Silver Spring, MD 20902
301-649-7100

A national parent network organized to combat drug and alcohol use and abuse by adolescents.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

5600 Fishers Lane, room 10A39
Rockville, MD 20857

301-443-1124

NIDA Infobox 888-644-6432 or
888-889-6439 (TTY)

www.nida.nih.gov

One of 24 research institutes, centers and divisions overseen by the National Institutes of Health. NIDA supports over 85 percent of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. NIDA-supported science addresses the most fundamental and essential questions about drug abuse, ranging from the molecule to managed care, and from DNA to community outreach research.

Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE)

3610 Dekalb Technology

Parkway, Suite 105

Atlanta, GA 30340

770-458-9900

www.prideusa.org

Promotes drug abuse prevention through education. Facilitates the organization of parent peer groups, parent-school teams, and community action groups to reduce adolescent drug abuse.

Resources for Treatment and Intervention

Every state has an alcohol and drug agency that can refer you to sources of help. You can also look up "Drug and Alcohol Treatment" in the Yellow Pages, or call your family physician or county mental health center. If you're concerned about a child, your school district may have a substance abuse counselor.

For specific information about conducting an intervention, contact:

The Johnson Institute

800-231-5165

www.johnsoninstitute.com

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)

For referrals to local trained intervention specialists:

800-NCA-CALL

University of New Mexico Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Addictions (UNM-CASAA)

Project CRAFT Web site:

www.unm.edu/~craft

Additional resources include:

Nar-Anon

(for families of drug abusers).

Meeting information:

310-547-5800

Phoenix House Foundation's National Helpline

(for referrals to local treatment facilities, self-help, and family support groups).

800-HELP-111

Web of Addictions

(for information on addiction).

www.well.com/user/woa

Visit Close to Home Online

www.pbs.org/closetohome or

www.wnet.org/closetohome

where you can find a Web soap comic book for teens, animated illustrations, in-depth articles, resources, a bulletin board, and more.

“Recovery’s about change and change is about freedom, you know, about *having* freedom.”

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356 West 58th Street
New York NY 10019

